



This edition of the GatewayConnector study newsletter will provide you an update on the study's progress, public involvement activities, and what you can expect in the near future. You'll also find answers to some of your questions and information about the next round of public informational meetings.

Alternative Corridors Developed

Following the July public meetings, the study team developed several 400-foot wide alternative corridors within the study area. In some parts of the study area, there are many alternatives; in others, just a few. These alternatives are potential locations where the final corridor could be placed with the greatest

benefit to the region and the least impacts to people, businesses, existing land use, and the environment.

You can view the alternatives and provide your input at the next series of public meetings in November. The alternatives will be posted to the project website following the public meetings.

Why Is This Needed?

IDOT conducted the Illinois Route 158 Outer Belt Feasibility Study from 1999-2001 to determine whether a new transportation corridor was needed to serve Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe counties. The study noted that population and employment in the area might increase by as much as 25% by 2020. (The feasibility study may be viewed online at www.gatewayconnector.com.)

The GatewayConnector study is a response to the significant growth and development already taking place in the region. This trend is expected to continue as more people discover the benefits of living and working here. Within the study area alone 40 new developments are planned, and Troy and Belleville recently approved large commercial development areas.

Waiting for development to occur is not responsible transportation planning. If IDOT does not act now to preserve a corridor for future transportation needs, it will be difficult in the future to place a corridor around or through development.

Communities determine where development should take place based on the needs of the people who live and work there. If you are concerned about development where you live, get involved locally. Make your voice heard to your village, city, and county leaders.



**Don't miss the next
Public Informational
Meetings November
12, 13 and 19! See
page 4 for details!**

Public Involvement

IDOT asked for your involvement in this important project, and you responded. Your input is important to the study's progress, and the project website - www.gatewayconnector.com - has been a source of useful information for many of you.

Numerous project updates have been provided to local officials, state legislators, and state and federal environmental resource agencies. Area leaders have said that the corridor will help them make informed land use decisions that are in the best interests of their communities, and will help their communities thrive and be successful in the future.

The Study Management Group (comprised of county engineers, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, Federal Highway Administration, and IDOT staff) held its second meeting in October to review the alternative corridors, discuss the study's progress, and provide input to the study team.

In addition, the study team has met with groups of interested residents and other individuals in the study area. These citizens

had questions and concerns about many aspects of the study, and their input has been valuable to the study team.

Over 550 people attended the first public meetings in July 2003. Your comments showed both support and opposition. Many of you said it was important that the corridor should avoid impacting residential, agricultural, and natural areas. Those in favor of the study said that a new facility is needed soon, and that it should follow existing roadways as much as possible. Those opposing the study were concerned about the corridor's need, its potential cost, and that it could negatively affect the region's character. This feedback played an important role in developing the alternative corridors; your future input will help the study team in selecting the final corridor.

Some common questions that have been asked throughout the study include:

- *Can't existing roads be improved?*

Some improvements, such as adding turn lanes, might provide short-term relief but will not suffice for future traffic volumes.

- *Can Illinois Route 4 be improved and used for the corridor?*

Traffic data show that improvements to Illinois Route 4 will not provide relief to other roadways. In fact, volumes on Troy-Scott Road are approaching the threshold for requiring additional lanes.

- *What happens if Scott AFB closes?*

Traffic data indicate that significant volume will remain on Illinois Route 158. The study team continues to discuss the impacts of base closure with base officials.

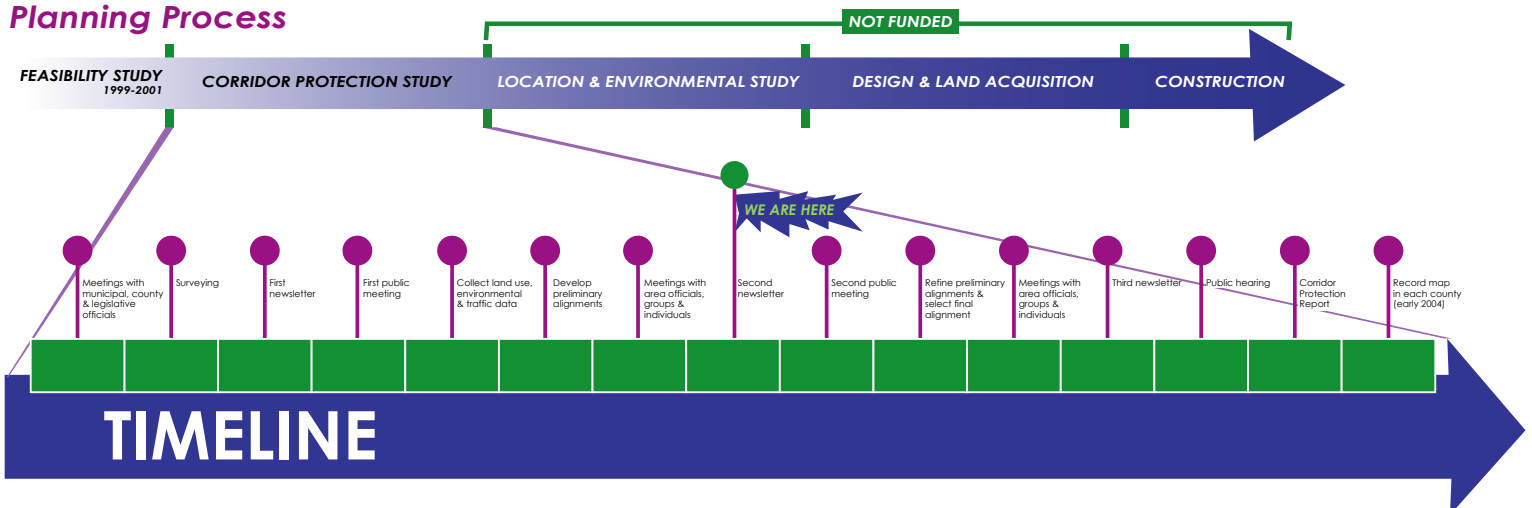
- *If I'm in the corridor how will my house be valued?*

Your property will be appraised by looking at comparable properties outside the corridor.

- *What if I live in the final selected corridor and can't sell my house?*

If you have made repeated attempts to sell, IDOT could identify your property for early purchase. IDOT land acquisition experts will be on hand at the next public meetings to answer these and other property-related questions.

Planning Process



What does “corridor protection” mean and how could it affect you or your property? Here are a few answers.

Planning, designing, and constructing new transportation facilities is a lengthy process that takes many years. Corridor protection allows IDOT to be proactive - to examine current and projected growth trends in order to determine the best location for a future roadway or other facility. Corridor protection has been a statute in the state highway code since 1967, when it was first enacted by the Illinois Legislature.

The corridor protection process is designed to:

- minimize impacts to people, commerce, and the environment
- minimize the cost to Illinois taxpayers of designing and building a new transportation facility
- provide a safe, efficient transportation facility that benefits the greatest number of people

Communities benefit from corridor protection because it helps them make smart development and planning decisions that are in the best interests of the people who live and work there. Motorists benefit from corridor protection with a safe facility well-suited to their needs.

The corridor protection statute also outlines the process IDOT must follow in acquiring property within the affected corridor. For the Gateway Connector corridor, a map will be filed in Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe counties in Summer 2004. Affected property owners will then be notified in writing.

If your property is within the corridor, you must notify IDOT if you plan to make improvements. IDOT then has the option to purchase your property or to allow the improvements to move forward. If IDOT decides to acquire your property, the purchase price is determined at the time of purchase and is based on comparable properties outside the corridor. Improvements you make without notifying IDOT may not be reimbursable if your property is later acquired.

To learn more about corridor protection, please visit the project website - www.gatewayconnector.com - where you can read the statute and view a brief presentation which describes the process in greater detail.

What's Next?

Following the November public meetings, the study team will begin evaluating the alternative corridors. This evaluation will look at several quantifiable criteria, such as engineering requirements, safety and traffic issues, and environmental impacts, as well as public input on the alternatives.

Based on the results of the evaluation, the study team will select an alternative as the final 400-foot wide corridor. A public hearing will then be held where you can examine the final corridor and provide your input. The corridor will then be recorded in Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe counties, and affected property owners will be notified. The expected timeframe for these events is:

- Preferred Alternative (final corridor): Spring 2004
- Public Hearing: Spring 2004
- Map Recorded: Summer 2004
- Letters sent to property owners: Summer 2004

The GatewayConnector study will not identify the type of facility to be located in the corridor (such as arterial, expressway, or freeway). That decision will be made during the location and environmental phase of study, which would begin after the final corridor is recorded. However, no funding is in place for future study, design, or land acquisition phases beyond the Gateway Connector study. Even if funding were available today, construction would most likely not begin for 10-12 years.

Public Informational Meetings

We look forward to seeing you at the project's second public informational meetings:

November 12, 2003 – 4 - 7 pm

The Falls Conference Center
300 Admiral Weinel Boulevard, Columbia

November 13, 2003 – 4 - 7 pm

Southwest Illinois College, Garden Room
2500 Carlyle Avenue, Belleville

November 19, 2003 – 4 - 7 pm

Triad High School cafeteria
703 East Highway 40, Troy

These will be "open-house" meetings – no formal presentations will be made. You will be able to examine the alternative corridors, traffic data, environmental resources, and other important study information. IDOT and consultant study team members will be on hand to answer questions, explain the project, and listen to your comments and concerns. We encourage you to attend and provide your input on the alternative corridors.

Informational handouts will be available and comment forms will be provided for you to fill out at the meeting or return to the study team by mail.

We Want To Hear From You

Public involvement is an important part of the GatewayConnector study. Become part of the process by attending public meetings, visiting the project website, and staying informed. If you have comments, questions, or concerns, you can contact us in a variety of ways:

Mail:

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